LAFAYETTE VISTAS

Published by the City of Lafayette

Fall 2008
Vol. 18, No.4

What's Up With That, Lafayette?

We often get questions from the public about various things going on around town. Here are some of the most common questions and their answers:

Why does the City allow the "Crosses of Lafayette"?

The crosses are installed on private property. At the time the installation was initiated in November 2006, the City's sign ordinance did not prohibit this type of display. Indeed, since no one at the City ever imagined that someone would put 4,000 signs on their property, there were no regulations in place to prohibit it. Finally, in June 2007, stimulated by the Crosses of Lafayette and the controversy it created, the City Council amended the ordinance to limit the total signage allowed on parcels in residential zones.

Because The Crosses are "grandfathered", the changes to the city sign law did not apply to the Deer Hill Road installation. The revised law would, however, prevent such displays in the future.

What's up with the Park Theater?

The Park Theater is currently owned by a private developer and no plans for the site have been submitted to the City.

When the theater was shuttered and became available for sale in 2003, the City Council recognized that it was an important downtown icon that contributed to the overall character of the City. The Council then appointed a citizens task force with the mission to identify and study options for preserving the Park Theater as a venue for the exhibition of motion pictures.

After a thorough analysis that included reviewing what other cities had done to preserve their single-screen theaters, the task force concluded that the theater could be profitably operated as a single-screen movie theater only if it could be purchased at a relatively low price. Unfortunately, the owner sold the property for approximately three times that amount to the developer.

Because the City has committed most of its RDA funding stream to the new library and is facing significant shortfalls in road and police funding, the task force recommended that the City not contribute significant funding to the purchase and/or support of the theater on an ongoing basis.

Instead the City offered a redevelopment matching grant of up to $25,000 for façade improvements, provided that the venue remain a movie theater. Neither the previous owner nor the current owner elected to take the City up on this offer.

When will the New Lafayette Library and Learning Center open?

The new library is expected to be completed late in 2009. Meantime, the Library Foundation has launched the second phase of its donation campaign, called "Open Doors, Open Minds" with the goal to raise $4 million for an endowment for building maintenance, additional library hours, and programs.

Recall that $9 million in generous donations from Lafayette residents will fund about 20% of the library construction. The rest of the construction funds are coming from a State grant ($12 million) and Redevelopment funds ($22 million), none of which can be used for library operations or other purposes, such as repairing local roads or paying for police expenses.

What is going to happen with the old library?

The Redevelopment Agency is contractually obligated to purchase the old library by June 2011 at fair market value not to exceed $1.25 million. With the completion of the new library just a year away, the City is evaluating various uses for the property.

Some ideas include using the building as a permanent home for City Offices (the City currently rents its office space), creating a public parking lot, building affordable housing or some combination of those. Alternatively, the Redevelopment Agency may decide to sell the property to a private developer. To ensure that the property is engaged in its highest and best use and in a way that makes the most financial sense, a detailed economic analysis will be completed for any option.

Why did the City pave Mt. Diablo Blvd. again last summer?

While portions of Mt. Diablo Blvd. have received life-extending treatments, the stretch of Mt. Diablo Blvd. that was paved had not been resurfaced in 15 years.

(continued on page 2)

What's Up With That, Lafayette *(continued from front)*

If the work was not completed now, the cost would likely have doubled over the next five years because the road would have further deteriorated and required a more extensive rehabilitation.

The funds came from the following sources:

- $540,000 – federal grant which could only be used specifically for Mt. Diablo Blvd.
- $240,000 – Lamorinda regional mitigation fee proceeds which could only be used for structural improvements on arterial roads
- $120,000 – balance from our share of gas tax

No general funds were used for this project.

When is Whole Foods coming to Lafayette?

The City has not received an application from Whole Foods. In order to open a store here, the chain would need to apply for a land use permit as well as go through the design review process for any exterior changes.

If and when the store (proposed to occupy the site of the closed Albertson's location) will actually open is unknown. According to the *East Bay Business Times: "While the near-term fate of 11 of the 13 Northern California locations for which Whole Foods has signed leases remains uncertain (Roseville will open in November; Santa Cruz will open the first quarter of 2009), David Lannon, president of Whole Foods' Northern California region, said that the company remains committed to opening all of the stores. He said some opening dates will be delayed, however. Final decisions on where to move ahead and where to hold back will be made in Austin."*

What are bike sharrows?

Photo © Jonathan Maus/BikePortland.org

The new roadway stencils on Mount Diablo Boulevard between Mountain View Drive and First Street are known as shared lane markings, or sharrows. Sharrows provide visual cues to drivers and bicyclists that reinforce the existing rules of the road and help both parties align themselves within a shared travel lane.

Sharrows do not indicate separate bike lanes. A motorist can still drive over the sharrows. If a bicyclist is nearby, drivers can use the sharrow to judge spacing so driver and bicyclist can share the lane safely. Otherwise, drive behind the bicyclist until it's safe to pass or move into the adjoining travel lane to pass.

Bicyclists should ride through the center of the sharrow with parked cars on their right and passing vehicles on their left. Sharrows improve safety by directing bicyclists to move a little further away from parked cars than they would normally ride in the absence of sharrows, thereby reducing their risk of getting "doored". Drivers can also see how much space to give when safely passing a bicyclist.

While bicycle lanes are still the best solution for creating safe conditions for all roadway users on high vehicle volume streets, the City is using sharrows in places where there isn't enough room for bicycle lanes.

Later in 2008, the City plans to install sharrows on the east end of Mt. Diablo Boulevard between the Lafayette Park Hotel and Pleasant Hill Road.

What's going on with the Hillside Motel site?

The Hillside Motel, behind the Veterans Memorial Building, was purchased by private developers who plan to build 65 luxury condos in 4 buildings as well as a clubhouse. All parking will be below grade. The project, known as The Woodbury, will also include improvements along the entire length of the EBMUD right of way between the Vets Building and the condos, including landscaping, an ADA accessible pedestrian and bicycle pathway, and public art.

In addition, as is mandated for all new housing projects within the Redevelopment Area, the developers will provide 18 affordable rental units (off site but within downtown Lafayette, at a site that is yet to be determined). Furthermore, the developers will pay an $800,000 housing in lieu fee to the City.

What's with the parking spaces in front of the Squirrel Restaurant?

The parking spaces next to Squirrel's were created in 2000, when Plaza Way was reconfigured to expand the public plaza space and make it a pedestrian-friendly slow street. This required reducing the number of parking spaces on Plaza Way. As a mitigation measure and to appease the merchants, four spaces were added on Moraga Road next to the restaurant, to be operated only during "shopping hours". In order to facilitate traffic flow from Moraga Road to Mt. Diablo Blvd., during peak commute times, parking is prohibited between 6-9 am and 2-4 pm, Monday through Friday.

The City's phone number is on the Comcast bill, so why can't the City help me regarding Comcast?

The City has a franchise agreement with Comcast because the cable service uses the City's right of way to provide service to their customers, but the City has no control over pricing or programming. The FCC regulates the base levels for programming and cost, and all other rates are at the sole discretion of the cable company. Meanwhile, the City does insist that certain customer service standards be in place as part of the franchise, so there may be several options the City can employ to help you resolve service issues. Call 284-1968 if you need assistance. Note that the City does not collect franchise fees nor have any control over cable Internet service.

Why does Lafayette spend time and money pursuing affordable housing?

To comply with state law. Because Lafayette has a Redevelopment Agency, the City is required to ensure that at least fifteen percent (15%) of all new or rehabilitated units developed within the downtown be made available to households of very low, low, and moderate income. Of this fifteen

(continued on page 3)

What's Up With That, Lafayette *(continued)*

percent, not less than forty percent (40%) must be set aside for very low income households. The median annual household income for Contra Costa County, which in 2008 was approximately $86,000, is used to calculate these ranges of affordability:

Affordability	Income Level
Moderate	$68,800 – $103,200
Low	$43,000 – $68,800
Very Low	<$43,000

Contrary to what some may believe, studies suggest that affordable housing does *not* bring down the value of the homes or property around it. With good design that is sensitive to the existing neighborhoods, affordable developments add to the character of the community and make the local area more desirable by increasing housing and transportation choices for residents. Furthermore, these income levels allow librarians, police, nurses, fire fighters, and teachers to live in the same communities where they work.

How many Volunteer Commissioners does the City have?

Lafayette has 21 commissions and committees comprised of 147 dedicated volunteers. All of the city's commissioners (and councilmembers) are unpaid and they dedicate many hours each week to their commission duties. In some cases, like the Planning Commission and Design Review, meetings may last into the wee hours of the morning! The city is fortunate to have a number of talented, knowledgeable residents willing to share their expertise and dedicate their time for free.

The City of Lafayette values citizen involvement in the decision making process and the city council relies on the commissions to assist them in making policy decisions that reflect the interests of the community.

Why does Lafayette have parking meters when Orinda and Moraga don't?

With a relatively compact retail core, providing adequate parking for shoppers in the downtown has long been a challenge. Lafayette first installed parking meters in 1992 as a way of ensuring that parking spaces were "turning over" at an appropriate rate, thus allowing shoppers the ability to find a parking space close to their destination. The net proceeds from parking meter revenue are deposited in a special account designated for providing parking improvements in the downtown.

My garbage didn't get picked up. Who do I call?

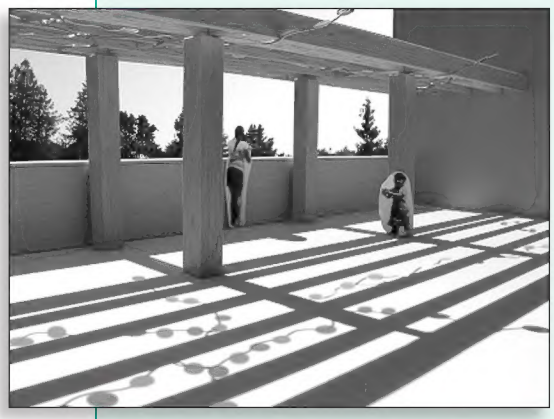
The City has agreements with Allied Waste for garbage and Valley Waste for recycling. If one of your bins does not get picked up and you are unsuccessful in contacting the companies directly, you can contact The Central Contra Costa Solid Waste Management Authority, which is the joint entity responsible for negotiating and managing our waste contracts. The CCCSWA staff can be reached at 906-1801.

Library Public Art

The new Lafayette Library and Learning Center includes a public art program and the Oakland Museum of California is assisting the City's Library Public Art Committee in its effort to select artists and artworks for the opening day collection. The first phase of this program is two commissions, one for the Outdoor Plaza Corridor and another for the Children's Activity Deck. After a comprehensive selection process, the Redevelopment Agency chose **Brian Goggin** to create the Corridor project and **Kana Tanaka** to design the Deck project.

Brian Goggin's piece is entitled "Excerpts". Set outside the Lafayette Library and Learning Center, a giant wavering stack of pages rises fourteen feet high. This towering bronze sculpture winds and teeters as it reaches absurd, precarious proportions. Wind catches the top pages and blows them across the Reading Court Plaza, through the Plaza stairway corridor and into the Main Plaza of the Library. Some pages are furling in mid-air and flying above the walkways. Others are wrapping around trellis posts, and past the Library walls; a few have settled on the plaza floor. Each fluttering page is cast in bronze and precisely etched with text from the Library's books. The artwork's playfulness will be juxtaposed against the elegant Craftsman architecture. The rich green tones of the patinaed bronze will integrate seamlessly in the color scheme of the Library.

Brian is a well-known public artist who has completed works for the San Francisco Arts Commission, San Jose Museum of Art, Seattle Art Commission, Sacramento International Airport, and Andy Warhol Foundation.



Kana Tanaka's concept is entitled "Optical Streams" and it will be placed in the children's Activity Deck. The installation will introduce young children to physics and science through the simple phenomena of light. Experiences include seeing the reflection and refraction of letters in colored lights that move across the deck floor and walls with the speed of the sun's movement, and optical phenomena through the unique shapes of hand sculptured glass lenses. Tanaka cites the seven creeks running through Lafayette as an important inspiration for the piece. The colored discs of light on the deck floor will create a creek pattern that will shift position and hue as the sun moves.

Kana's public artwork includes commissions for Solano County, the City of Sacramento, and the City of Davis.

Ten Ways to Destroy Your Town

Printed with permission from an article written by Glenn Crowson, former City Manager of Desert Hot Springs, CA

Private citizens play a major role in presenting the image of their towns. Believe it or not, one person can make a big difference in the way their home town is perceived. The average person may come in contact with 10 people a day — 70 people a week. That's almost 4,000 people a year. But, if you don't think your attitude is important to your community, here are 10 ways to destroy your town:

1. **Complain about the local government officials.** Spread the word about how incompetent and crooked they are. Let everyone know that they have no common sense and are only in it for themselves.
2. **Whine about the local newspaper.** It doesn't print anything important, certainly not the truth.
3. **Stay away from community events.** It isn't important to attend local ballgames, concerts, parades or school activities. Who cares? We can watch more important things on TV.
4. **Never go to community meetings.** City councils, district boards, planning commissions and local committees that are working to improve our lifestyles never listen to us anyway.
5. **Boycott getting involved** in service clubs, church groups, youth sports organizations and neighborhood watch programs. Never volunteer at the library, or at neighborhood schools. What a waste of time!
6. **Badmouth the local Chamber of Commerce.** Those people are only in it for the publicity and the money. We don't have time to serve on any committees or attend their activities.
7. **Don't shop locally.** Buy everything at the big discount store miles away. Everyone knows you can get items cheaper at the outlet mall or online.
8. **Don't get to know your neighbors.** Stay inside your fence and don't concern yourself with the welfare of others. They won't help you, so why help them?
9. **Complain bitterly about the environment.** It's too hot. It's too windy. It's too cold. Too many ants. Blowing sand and dust is constant. Don't forget to tell your best earthquake story.
10. **Generalize often and loudly.** We know that all kids are a bunch of delinquents. It doesn't do any good to call the police, they can't solve the crimes anyway.

Here is an extra one for free: Be a grouch. Why make it friendly for tourists and visitors? More traffic, more lines at the grocery, more lines at the gas station, more slow drivers....Who needs it?

Attitudes such as those listed above are unfortunately common. We hear them every day and sometimes we catch ourselves thinking or even saying them. We should all make an effort to look at the positive side of your community. Improving the quality of life in your neighborhood and town may begin with one person, **you**.

City Directory

For Council Members call: **284-1968**

Council Members

Mike Anderson	**Mayor**
Don Tatzin	**Vice Mayor**
Brandt Andersson	**Council Member**
Carl Anduri	**Council Member**
Carol Federighi	**Council Member**

Messages to **all** Council Members:
cityhall@lovelafayette.org

Administration

General Reception and	**284-1968**
Steven Falk, City Manager	**Fax: 284-3169**
Tracy Robinson, Admin. Srv. Dir.	**299-3227**
Gonzalo Silva, Financial Srv. Mgr.	**299-3213**
Joanne Robbins, City Clerk	**299-3210**

Community Development

Ann Merideth, Director	**299-3218**
Tony Coe, Engineering Srv. Mgr.	**284-1951**
Niroop Srivatsa, Planning Srv. Mgr.	**284-1976**
Ron Lefler, Public Works Srv. Mgr.	**299-3214**
P.W. Hotline (to report problems)	**299-3259**

If you observe illegal dumping in creeks & storm drains or accidental spills on roads, call Contra Costa Hazardous Materials Division 646-2286.

Lamorinda School Bus Program

Juliet Hansen, Program Mgr.	**299-3216**
	Or 299-3215

Parks, Trails and Recreation — 284-2232

Jennifer Russell, Director

Senior Services	**284-5050**

Police Services

Emergency: 24 Hours	**911**
Police Dispatch: 24 Hours	**284-5010**
Police Business Office:	**283-3680**

Anonymous Tipline, Traffic Enforcement, Suggestions & LEARN (Laf. Emergency Action Response Network), 299-3232 X 2205

Fax	**284-3169**
Address	**3675 Mt. Diablo Blvd. #210, Lafayette, CA 94549**
Website	**www.ci.lafayette.ca.us**

E-MAIL: Council/staff members can be reached via e-mail using this address format:
First Initial + Last Name @lovelafayette.org
Example: SFalk@lovelafayette.org

Want more City news online? Subscribe to the *City Manager's Weekly Summary* by sending an email to sfalk@lovelafayette.org

LAFAYETTE

City of Lafayette
3675 Mt. Diablo Blvd. #210
Lafayette, CA 94549

PRSRT STD
U.S. Postage
PAID
Lafayette, CA
Permit No. 161

Postal Customer
Lafayette, CA 94549

Printed on Recycled Paper